

of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

GEORGE BUSH

Proclamation 6093 of February 12, 1990

181st Anniversary of the Birth of Abraham Lincoln

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

A true friend of the common man and a courageous leader at our Nation's greatest hour of trial, Abraham Lincoln occupies a special place of honor in the hearts of all Americans. Each February 12, as we commemorate the anniversary of his birth, we celebrate the peace and unity of purpose President Lincoln reclaimed for this country—and the shining hope he restored to all mankind.

When he became President in 1861, Abraham Lincoln was faced with a grave crisis: seven States, determined to preserve the institution of slavery and to assert what they viewed as their sovereign rights, had seceded from the Union. After a military confrontation at Fort Sumter, the Civil War began.

Lincoln believed that the success of our Nation's great experiment in self-government depended on the strength and integrity of the Union and on the degree to which Americans, as well as the national Government, remained true to the ideals expressed at the Founding. Although the War tried his skills as President and tested whether a nation "so conceived and so dedicated" could long endure, his convictions proved unshakable. In a July 4th Address to the Congress, he declared that the War was nothing less than "a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men . . . to afford all an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life."

Abraham Lincoln knew that for the United States to endure, it must remain faithful to the noble ideal enshrined in our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Lincoln believed that excluding any human beings from this promise undermines the moral foundation on which our Nation rests. He had once argued that our Nation's Founding Fathers "meant to set up a standard maxim for a free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for . . . thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere." Lincoln knew that our Nation must always strive to fulfill its great promise, or risk its very existence.

Throughout the course of the War, Lincoln remained fully committed to the idea of liberty under law. For him, striving to uphold the Constitution and protect the rights of individuals was not only compatible with preserving the Union, but essential to it. In 1864, when he was elected

to a second term in office, Lincoln reflected aloud: "We cannot have free government without elections; and if the rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might fairly claim to have already conquered and ruined us." The success of the electoral process reaffirmed Lincoln's conviction that the principles upon which our Nation was founded must—and could—withstand the fiery ordeal it now suffered. Lincoln's leadership throughout the Civil War was inspired by a firm belief in those principles.

Abraham Lincoln's aversion to the institution of slavery was known long before he took office. Perhaps it was his experience as a young man, clearing land on the frontier and working odd jobs while he studied law, that enabled him to see the injustice of earning one's bread as the fruit of another man's labor. Ultimately, however, Lincoln saw slavery as dehumanizing, a cruel contrast to the ideals expressed in our Nation's Declaration of Independence. In 1858, campaigning for the Senate, he reminded an audience at Edwardsville, Illinois, that our Nation's strength and purpose are found in the spirit that prizes liberty as the heritage of all men. "Destroy this spirit," the young statesman warned, "and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors. . . . Accustomed to trample on the rights of others, you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you." Lincoln realized that slavery violently contradicted the shining promise of America. His issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation became a decisive factor in the Civil War—and one of the historic and crowning achievements of Lincoln's life.

Leading our country through the perilous years of civil war, Abraham Lincoln ensured its safe passage by remaining faithful to the principles upon which it was founded. Today, as we mark the anniversary of his birth, we are grateful for his courage and wisdom, and for his example.

With an unfailing commitment to justice and an equally profound sense of mercy and compassion, Lincoln exhorted his fellow Americans to act "with malice toward none, with charity for all." He cared for the Union and for the individual Americans of all races, all conditions, and all regions. In his eyes, the great experiment in self-government launched by our Nation's Founders represented "the last, best hope of Earth." Today, recalling the timeless spirit of his historic Gettysburg Address, let us rededicate ourselves to "the unfinished work" Abraham Lincoln so nobly advanced. As individuals and as a Nation, let us strive to be governed "by the better angels of our nature," always choosing the sure and righteous course marked for us by the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. This is the cause for which Lincoln gave his life, and it is the cause that we, too, must represent in the world and carry on for the sake of generations yet unborn.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby urge all Americans to observe February 12, 1990—the 181st anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln—with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities designed to honor his memory and to reaffirm our commitment to the ideals he so faithfully defended.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

GEORGE BUSH

Proclamation 6094 of February 12, 1990

Vocational-Technical Education Week, 1990

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Throughout the history of the United States, the American people have always had the highest regard for practical invention and design. Today we still value the skillful use of tools and technology, as well as the application of innovative ideas. Both are vital to the success of business and industry, and both are vital to a strong economy.

This week, we recognize the importance of vocational and technical education in our Nation's public and private schools. If the United States is to remain a leader in the increasingly competitive global marketplace, it must not only be committed to excellence in the production of goods and services, but also be capable of achieving it. By preparing young men and women for work in highly specialized technical fields, vocational-technical education programs make an important contribution to our Nation's strength and productivity.

The students and teachers engaged in vocational-technical education know that it holds great rewards for individuals, as well as for the Nation. Through vocational-technical education, aspiring entrepreneurs gain the knowledge and skills they need to establish and maintain their own businesses. Many other students pursue exciting careers in health care, electronics, engineering, and other challenging fields.

Graduates of vocational-technical education programs can take great pride in knowing that they possess the kind of learning and expertise relied upon by millions of people every day. In short, vocational-technical education works—and it works for all of us.

In acknowledgment of the great value of vocational and technical education, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 130, has designated the week of February 11 through February 17, 1990, as "Vocational-Technical Education Week" and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of February 11 through February 17, 1990, as Vocational-Technical Education Week. I invite all Americans to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities designed to highlight the benefits of quality vocational-technical education.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety, and